

A Study on the Strategies for Conservation and Organic Renewal of Historical and Cultural Districts

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Abstract: In order to protect historical and cultural blocks, and improve the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the theory on the protection and renewal of historical and cultural blocks, this article analyzes and reviews relevant literatures on the development of the theory and practice of the protection and renewal of historical and cultural blocks at home and abroad. It discusses the four aspects of the protection and renewal of historical and cultural blocks at home and abroad, namely the definition of renewal concept, stage division, research focus and practice mode. So as to put forward the research strategy and suggestions for the protection and renewal planning of historical and cultural blocks in our country.

Keywords: Historical and Cultural Districts; Organic Renewal; Urban Planning;

Introduction

With the acceleration of urbanization, the Chinese government pays more and more attention to the conservation and renewal of historical and cultural districts, and scholars at home and abroad have done a lot of research on the conservation and renewal of historical and cultural districts. Research shows that historical and cultural district is the focus of historical and cultural city conservation, because it has historical and revolutionary significance. However, its conservation is not simply a matter of planning, but a comprehensive social practice^[1]. Based on this, this paper presents an overview of the concept of conservation and renewal of historical and cultural districts, the development history, the research focus and the practice model at home and abroad.

1. Historical District and Historical Cultural District

The protection of historic district has experienced a long process, and the object of the concept has gradually become clear. International research on historical and cultural districts is much earlier than that of China, which can be divided into two stages according to their development and evolution process: the early stage of conceptualization and the late stage of conceptual deepening. The concept of historical district in the inter-nation has evolved from its initial introduction in 1931 to its clarification in 1987, and from the initial "district conservation" to the later "historical district". It can be seen that the historical and cultural district is a dynamic process of constant movement^[2]. In contrast with international research, the study of historical districts in China originated in the 1980s, and its scope became

increasingly broad when the State Council issued a policy in 1982 to define the term clearly .

2.The development history of conservation and renewal of historical districts at home and abroad

Urban conservation, which originated in the late 18th century, has gradually moved into a scientific, systematic and theoretical track after nearly a century of development since the middle of 19th century^[3].Based on the study of the literature on historical district conservation from the beginning of the 20th century to the present. This article divides the research process of historic district protection into three periods: enlightenment stage, preliminary development and in-depth development: ① The initial period of enlightenment: the promulgation of the Historical Monuments Act of 1913 and the Athens Charter of 1933, which began the conservation of single ancient buildings. ② The initial development Period can be divided into three phases. The first phase is the Venice Charter in 1964, which initially formed an understanding of the integrity and historicity of historical relics. The second one is the Nairobi Recommendations in 1976, which further clarified and accelerated the protection of historical towns and neighborhoods. The last one is the Washington Charter in 1987, which emphasized the protection of historical towns and urban areas and formed a more complete protection system. ③ The in-depth development period: With the promulgation of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Conservation of Cultural Relics in 2002 and the introduction of various conservation regulations, the conservation system of historical districts has been gradually improved.

3.Research focus on the conservation and renewal planning of historical districts at home and abroad

The core issues of the conservation and renewal planning of domestic and foreign historical districts include the theory of conservation and renewal, the landscape improvement, the revitalization of street vibrancy and public participation in an organic cycle of four levels, namely, material space, human elements, material economy and public participation.

3.1 The theories of conservation and renewal of historical districts in different periods

The theories of conservation and renewal of historical districts have roughly gone through four phases, including the large-scale social transformation in the 18th century, the adjustment of renewal methods in the 19th century, the gradual renewal under the idea of sustainable development in the 20th century, and the diversification and sustainability of renewal theories in the 21st century. The theories are still being improved gradually at present. ① The Industrial Revolution in the 18th century made the entire society move a “Great Leap Forward” in manufacturing and producing industry, but it entirely ignored the protection of valuable historical districts and the environment and there was no targeted protection and renewal theory. ② After the 19th century, large-scale urban renewal emerged, a series of urban revitalization activities and movements of renewal approaches emerged, and theories of conservation and renewal came in to being accordingly. ③ In the first half of the 20th century, some scholars proposed to preserve buildings and neighborhoods with historical value, and various theories of conservation and renewal emerged during this period, such as “organic renewal”“holistic conservation”,and“continuous improvement”^[4]. Among them, the theory of organic regeneration advocates respecting the intrinsic development law of the districts and following the texture of the districts in the process of conservation and renewal. The theory of holistic conservation emphasizes maintaining the integrity of the historical districts ^[5]. It can be seen that the theories of conservation and renewal for historic districts are often proposed in response to the characteristics of the historic districts and the current situation of the districts at that time. Therefore, if the theories are more suitable for the actual situation of the districts at that time, it can be more targeted to solve the problems.

3.2 Feature improvement actions for historic districts from macro to micro levels

Historic districts carry the memory of a city, different from the architectural, human and social features of modern cities^[6]. The features of China's historic districts are mainly focused on the meso and micro levels of the core conservation areas, with little involvement in the macro, meso and micro levels of the construction control areas, which leads to a disconnection between the top and bottom of the feature improvement efforts and the emergence of various problems such as the inconsistency of the overall feature of the district^[7]. Therefore, the improvement of the style and features of historical blocks should be based on the determination of the scope of protection and the multi-level urban planning system, which should be deepened gradually from macro to micro, so as to make it more reasonable and timely improve the characteristics of the environment, roads and other infrastructure around individual buildings^[8].

3.3 Revitalization by a combination of external environment and social culture

Kevin Lynch in his book "Good Urban Form" points out that the vitality of cities is reflected in the harmony, continuity, stability, and safety of urban form. Xun Qi, in her book "The Death and Life of Great American Cities," points out that urban vitality comes from the diversity of civic life^[9]. The modern organic renewal theory of historic districts advocates to explore the secondary renewal and development of the districts based on sustainable development to enhance the vitality of the districts^[10]. Factors affecting neighborhood vitality are divided into two main aspects: external environment and social culture, where the external environment mainly includes infrastructure, street space, and functional composition^[11]. A good commercial structure can gather popularity in a short time, which can not only attract tourists, but also serve local residents, and the diversity of the crowd is also the power source to enhance the vitality of the community.

3.4 Shifting from theoretical research to public participation with a high degree of integration of theory and practice

The development of public participation theory in the international arena has been relatively mature. In 1969, American scholar Shelley Anstine proposed the theory of "ladder of citizen participation", which argued that the public should actively participate in the renovation of historic districts and old buildings. In 1998, Fang Guodong proposed the theory of "liaison planning", which argued that the public should play a unique role in the renovation of urban neighborhoods^[12]. In the early 1990s, China began to introduce public participation theory in urban renewal and produced a series of theoretical research results, mainly on residents' attitudes and public participation methods^[13]. In 2007, Dai Xiangyi wrote a book focusing on advanced public participation measures and policies in Europe and the United States, which provides a reference for knowledge related to public participation in the renovation practice of historic districts^[14]. At present, scholars have conducted thorough research on the theory of public participation in historic districts, but its application in current planning practice and the requirement of public participation in the real sense are still far from being achieved.

4. The practice model of conservation and renewal planning of historical districts at home and abroad

The current conservation and renewal of historic districts in China is mainly divided into two modes of conservation: static conservation and dynamic conservation. Ruan Yisan^[15] et al. summarized the practical models of conservation and renewal of historic districts in China as the "Pudu Temple" model in Beijing, the "Tongfang Lane" model in Suzhou, the "Northeast Corner of Luwan District" model in Shanghai, the "Three Square Seven Lanes" model in Fuzhou, and the "Jiangnan Town" model in Tongxiang. The "Pudu Temple" model in Beijing mainly preserves and repairs a large number of courtyards with good quality and features, and makes functional changes to the internal housing structure, while some dilapidated houses are demolished and rebuilt. The "Tongfang Lane" model in Suzhou uses a model where all the land is given away for a commercial housing development company, and all but one of the older buildings of good quality are demolished and newly built, so that the feature of the entire neighborhood is in

harmony with the overall feature of the old city. The renovation of the “Northeast corner of Luwan District” in Shanghai adopts the approach of “preserving the surface and removing the interior”, which means preserving the exterior and external environment of the building, while completely renewing the interior to adapt to the new use function. In Fuzhou’s “Three Lanes and Seven Alleys” model, except for some protected buildings, all the other buildings are demolished and then high-rise buildings are built. The focus is entirely on large-scale commercial development and the economic benefits it brings; The “Jiangnan Town” of Tongxiang adopts the method of “repairing the old as the old”, by using some ancient building materials to decorate the environment

The conservation and renewal model of European historic districts is very different from the Chinese model. It has undergone a process of transformation from a static conservation model such as facade-based and appropriate reuse of historic districts to a dynamic conservation model such as functional mixing.

It can be seen that most of the domestic and foreign practice models of conservation and renewal of historic districts are static or dynamic. We shall actively explore the practice mode suitable for the historical district, and try to use the targeted theory of historical district protection and renewal by considering the social problems and public participation degree of historical district and taking reasonable renewal and revitalization characteristics of the districts, so as to form the practice mode of static and dynamic adaptation.

5. Conclusion

In general, there are more theoretical knowledge and qualitative research but less technical research and quantitative research on the conservation and renewal of historic districts in China. However, it is easy to see from this development process that the conservation and renewal of China’s historic districts are entering a new period of development, namely, conceptual clarity, practical dynamism and methodological quantification. In the era of big data and network, the new urbanization construction needs to pay attention to the comprehensive protection and renewal of historical blocks. At the same time, on the basis of material construction, we should pay more attention to the spiritual pursuit and emotional maintenance, so as to truly make the city a better life.

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